

UPPER NEW RIVER WILD & SCENIC RIVER STUDY

FOUNDATIONS FOR FUTURE MANAGEMENT

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This document identifies important concepts related to future management of the New River and adjacent lands in Virginia and West Virginia that are part of the Upper New River Wild and Scenic River Study. The concepts are organized into four categories: goals, management principles, assurances, and potential management plan components. These concepts apply to each management alternatives under consideration in the study, with the exception of Alternative 1: Continuation of Current Management. In addition, the goals, management principles, and assurances are sufficiently important that they should be referenced in any federal legislation that may result.

These concepts have been identified through consultation with a range of key stakeholders, including representatives of state and federal agencies, local and county officials, sporting groups and other recreationists, businesses, and conservation interests.

GOALS

The following goals will serve as the foundation for all decisions regarding management and use of the area. Consistency with these goals is the primary measure for determining the range of management directions and actions that might be considered.

1. Recognizing existing upstream water management and the variability of natural conditions, maintain sufficient stream flow, water quality, and riparian corridor conditions to sustain the outstanding resource values that make the river eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Enhance these values wherever possible.
2. Maintain the natural conditions and functions of the river and adjacent lands.
3. Provide a range of habitats and conditions to support a diversity of species and healthy populations of fish and wildlife and ensure that these species and populations will persist into the future.
4. Protect special natural features, scenic landscapes, sensitive plant and wildlife species, and historic sites that are important to the area's natural and cultural heritage.
5. Retain the study area's predominantly undeveloped, rugged, and relatively remote character.
6. Provide opportunities for the public to participate in outdoor recreational activities that make use of, and are consistent with, long-term conservation of the natural environment, with an emphasis on traditional uses including hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife observation, camping, boating, and, in general, experiencing a remote outdoor setting. Provide an environment that allows people participating in these activities to have a high quality experience.

7. Contribute to the region's livability and economy by providing appropriate outdoor recreational opportunities to both residents and visitors that complement other local and regional recreational opportunities.
8. Continue to provide flood control for communities downstream of the Bluestone Dam, and balance other demands for water use outside the study area (including for energy production, waste assimilation, water supply, commercial and industrial uses, and recreation) with maintenance of the river's environmental quality.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

While goals define what should occur, management principles describe how those involved in management of the area will conduct their business.

1. Management will respect traditional patterns of use and adjacent ownership.
2. Management decisions will be made mindful of the broader regional context in order to contribute to regional objectives and complement regional activities.
3. Collaborative working relationships will be established and maintained with gateway communities, both up and downstream, with counties, and with other Federal, state, regional, and local authorities with a stake in the management of the river and river corridor.
4. Meaningful public involvement opportunities will be provided, in order that the counties, municipalities, public and private organizations, and interested citizens can learn about -- and become engaged in -- the planning and management of the area.
5. An emphasis will be placed on consistency and continuity of management with adjacent public lands, including lands currently administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers upstream and downstream of the study area, and with other significant public lands in the region, including the New River Gorge National River, the Bluestone National Scenic River, Bluestone and Pipestem State Parks, and the Jefferson National Forest.

ASSURANCES

Regardless of the alternative selected, there are certain fundamental provisions that will apply. These assurances generally relate to the continuation of specific aspects of the current situation in the area, and are consistent with the goals and management principles identified in the previous sections.

1. The operation of Bluestone Dam for the authorized purposes of flood control, hydropower, fish and wildlife, recreation, and downstream recreation will not be affected, nor will upstream flowage rights. The dam may be retrofitted for energy production, subject to existing laws and regulations and consistent with the long-term conservation of the river's outstanding resource values. The Army Corps of Engineers will retain ownership of lands that are necessary for Bluestone Dam operations.

2. Wildlife species and their habitats will be managed in a manner that provides healthy populations into the future. Management will seek to integrate sound scientific understanding and methodology to guide decision-making.
3. High quality hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities will be provided for current and future generations, subject to normal restrictions for public safety, meeting critical management objectives and legal requirements (e.g., protecting threatened or endangered species).
4. State and federal agencies will retain their existing authorities, as defined by federal and state law, over the management of fish and wildlife species and the regulation of hunting, fishing and trapping.
5. The operations of American Electric Power's Glen Lyn Plant and Claytor Dam will not be affected, unless changes are proposed that could significantly affect water quality or the free-flowing condition of the river. State and federal water resource and/or environmental protection agencies will make decisions regarding water quality and flow using applicable state and federal law. The existing lease of lands within the wild and scenic river study area to American Electric Power in Glen Lyn, Virginia, for flyash disposal will not be affected.
6. Applicable Federal and state laws and regulations will apply, including the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and state equivalents.
7. For those alternatives involving transfer of lands, provisions apply equally to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lands in Virginia upstream of the Route 460 Bridge. In other words, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will not be left with the responsibility of managing outlier parcels.
8. Condemnation (or "eminent domain") will not be used as a means to acquire lands or easements for purposes of managing the project area. Any land acquisition that may occur would be through purchase from willing sellers and would be used only when necessary to achieve critical management objectives (e.g., to secure important public access).

POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

Regardless of the alternative selected, a management plan will be prepared to guide future management activities. The goals, management principles, and assurances defined above will be incorporated into any such plan. During the study process, a number of specific actions also have been suggested for inclusion in the plan. Some of these aim to resolve existing issues, others to fill unmet needs. Many of these ideas enjoy broad-based support and appear to be consistent with any future management approach, and therefore warrant careful consideration when it comes time to develop a management plan.

Site Improvements:

- Assist the town of Glen Lyn, Virginia to make additional improvements to the town-managed riverfront park. These improvements would be aimed at establishing this location as a principal point for river access and providing information to the public.

- Enhance existing campgrounds in the West Virginia portion of the study area. Depending on location, these improvements may include updating sanitary facilities, moving campsites in eroded/sensitive riparian areas away from immediate shoreline, defining parking areas, etc.
- Evaluate the need, cost, and desirability of establishing a developed campground with basic facilities (including sanitary facilities and potable water) along the river in Virginia.
- In collaboration with American Electric Power, evaluate the potential for re-use of AEP's existing flyash landfill in Glen Lyn, Virginia for recreation and/or other purposes that complement the conservation and recreational use of the river corridor. Any proposal for re-use of the site must recognize and respect AEP's need to continue to dispose of fly ash, which will occur on another site outside of but near the study boundary. Particular attention should be given to potential safety issues that could arise from increased public use of the narrow road that AEP's trucks will need to use to haul flyash to the new landfill.
- Restore, protect and monitor degraded sites in Virginia, including informal river access points, primitive campsites, and areas heavily impacted by 4-wheel drive vehicles.

Management:

- Increase management presence and law enforcement in the Virginia portion of the study area.
- Organize an annual river cleanup, perhaps as a collaborative, public participation project.
- Establish a policy to confine the use of motorized vehicles to designated roadways in order to protect wildlife, habitat, and other sensitive resources, and to avoid disrupting traditional recreational activities.
- Explore the feasibility of allowing holders of valid Virginia or West Virginia fishing licenses to fish the Upper New River in both states.

Planning:

- Develop a recreation/public access plan that emphasizes traditional uses and explores opportunities for other uses, provided that those opportunities would not conflict with traditional uses or degrade resources. This plan also should address the issue of public use carrying capacity.
- Develop a strategy for enhancing river-related recreational opportunities by, for example, improving access; establishing boat access only campsites; providing information on access, safety, and potential trips; etc.
- Develop a resource management plan (including natural and cultural resource identification, protection, and interpretation).
- Evaluate the need for land acquisition and, if acquisition is needed, develop a judicious (limited) land acquisition plan with public input. (As described in the management principles above, any land acquisition would be from willing sellers.)
- Develop a plan for public information, education and interpretation that complements the conservation and recreational use of the area, and emphasizes facilities and techniques that are consistent with the area's relatively remote, undeveloped character.

- Develop a road management plan that would identify potential road improvements, access limitations/closures, maintenance responsibilities, and funding requirements.

Research:

- Conduct a study of the rate and extent of siltation in Bluestone Lake to determine the potential impacts of sedimentation on lake levels, lake recreation, and the free flowing character of the New River immediately upstream of Bluestone Lake.
- Complete the inventory of historic and archeological sites initiated by the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Complete baseline inventories for biological and physical resources.
- Conduct a public use carrying capacity study and establish a long-term program to monitor public use of the area.

Linkages:

- Develop a strategy for interaction with the towns/cities of Glen Lyn, Virginia and Hinton, West Virginia that would emphasize their status as gateway communities. Develop similar connections to the three abutting West Virginia counties and Giles County, Virginia.
- Develop meaningful and mutually beneficial partnerships with appropriate private sector entities, including AEP, outfitters/guides, local and regional sporting groups, conservation organizations, etc.
- Explore and develop connections with other river conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives in the region, such as the Bluestone National Scenic River, the New River Blueway, the New River American Heritage River Initiative, the New River Gorge National River and Gauley River National Recreation Area, the Jefferson National Forest, and watershed efforts on Indian Creek and the upper Bluestone River.